NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6242 NOVEMBER 3, 1978
WILLIAM LEAVITT

BROWN TO SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

ANNCR:

U.S. DEFENSE SECRETARY HAROLD BROWN LEAVES SUNDAY (NOV 5) FOR VISITS TO SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN AND TALKS WITH KEY OFFICIALS IN THOSE COUNTRIES. THE BROWN TRIP UNDERSCORES THE CONTINUING AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO THE SECURITY OF THE EAST-ASIA PACIFIC AREA, AS VOA'S WILLIAM LEAVITT POINTS OUT IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

A LOT HAS CHANGED IN EAST ASIA SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR TWO AND THE KOREAN CONFLICT OF THE 1950S. SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN ARE BOTH FAR STRONGER ECONOMICALLY AND MILITARILY THAN THEY WERE IN YEARS PAST. ALSO WEAPONRY ITSELF HAS IMPROVED, ALONG WITH THE ABILITY TO MOVE MEN AND EQUIPMENT QUICKLY. THESE ARE SOME OF THE KEY REASONS FOR DEVELOPING CHANGES IN THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS IN THE AREA. A KEY ASPECT OF THOSE CHANGES IS THE PLANNED REDUCTION OF AMERICAN FORCE LEVELS IN SOUTH KOREA, SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR

DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN WILL BE TALKING ABOUT SUCH MATTERS WITH SOUTH KOREAN AND JAPANESE OFFICIALS DURING HIS VISITS. HE'LL BE MAKING CLEAR THAT AMERICAN FORCE WITHDRAWALS FROM SOUTH KOREA WILL ONLY OCCUR AFTER A COMPLETE ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IN THE AREA, IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT SUCH WITHDRAWALS WILL NOT CREATE ANY INSTABILITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA OR IN THE DEFENSE OF SOUTH KOREA. HE'LL ALSO POINT OUT THAT BEFORE EACH CONTEMPLATED FORCE WITHDRAWAL, PRESIDENT CARTER WILL CONSULT WITH CONGRESS.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE -- ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF THE CONTINUING AMERICAN COMMITTMENT TO SOUTH KOREAN SECURITY -- THAT CONGRESS HAS TAKEN A KEEN INTEREST IN THE MATTER AND HAS VOTED TO TRANSFER, WITHOUT REIMBURSEMENT, SOME 800 MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF AMERICAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SOUTH KOREAN MILITARY FORCES, ALONG WITH THE NECESSARY TRAINING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES. THE EQUIPMENT WILL BE DELIVERED OVER A PERIOD OF FOUR TO FIVE YEARS.

THAT, COMBINED WITH ADDITIONAL AMERICAN AIRPOWER IN THE AREA, FURTHER UNDERLINES THE HIGH PRIORITY WASHINGTON ATTACHES TO SOUTH KOREA'S SECURITY AS WELL AS JAPAN'S. AMERICAN MILITARY POWER IN THE REGION REMAINS CONSIDERABLE, INCLUDING, AS IT DOES: B-52 STRATEGIC BOMBERS, BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINES, TACTICAL FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, AIRCRAFT CARRIERS, CRUISERS AND DESTROYERS, AND MARINE GROUND AND AIR FORCES. AND, AS SECRETARY BROWN WILL SURELY POINT OUT TO BOTH SOUTH KOREAN AND JAPANESE OFFICIALS, THIS AGGREGATION OF STRENGTH IN A REGION WASHINGTON CONSIDERS CRUCIAL TO AMERICA'S OWN SECURITY WILL BE ENHANCED BY EVEN MORE ADVANCED WEAPON SYSTEMS AS TECHNOLOGY PROCEEDS.

WJL/PY